



# University of New Haven

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

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Program of Philosophy

PHIL 1101, Section 01  
Introduction to Philosophy  
Fall 2017  
MW from 10:50 to 12:05 PM  
105 Kaplan Hall  
3 Credit Hours

Dr. Douglas Ficek  
Visiting Assistant Professor  
310 Maxcy Hall  
203-932-1177 (Office)  
DFicek@newhaven.edu  
Office Hours: T from 1:00 to 3:00 PM

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Course Description

The father of Western philosophy, Socrates once said that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” Many years later, the British philosopher Bertrand Russell commented that “many people would rather die than think – in fact, they do!”

At its heart, philosophy is about examining life and thinking critically about ourselves and the world we live in. When we do this, according to many philosophers, we use the one quality that makes us distinct as human beings – namely, *reason*. Of course, most philosophical questions cannot be answered with absolute certainty, and this could become an annoying theme for you as we proceed through the readings. Do not get too frustrated. Just remember that philosophy is best understood as a journey, not as a destination. Consider the following passage – again, from Bertrand Russell:

“Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination and *diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation*; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.”

In the first part of this course, we will look at four of Plato's dialogues: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*. These dialogues depict the last days of Socrates, who was sentenced to death for, among other things, corrupting the youth of Athens, and they will illustrate not only what philosophy is, but also how philosophy is done. Holiness, justice, duty, immortality – we will explore these topics and more.

In the second part of this course, we will read René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy*, one of the founding texts of modern philosophy. You have probably heard the famous sentence, “I think, therefore I am.” This is from Descartes, and we will work to understand exactly what it means. Be prepared to doubt everything – from your body to your memory, from God to the external world.

In the third part of this course, we will consider one of the most important texts in the history of ethical theory: Immanuel Kant's *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*. This challenging text is about nothing less than the Moral Law and our absolute duty to it. For Kant, what is morally right is morally right, regardless of circumstances, from which it follows that there are no exceptions to it. Ask yourself: Is it ever okay to lie?

In the fourth part of this course, we will consider another important text on ethical theory: John Stuart Mill's *Utilitarianism*. Unlike Kant, who disregards consequences, Mill bases his approach to ethical theory entirely on consequences. You have probably heard people say that “the end justifies the means.” Well, that is a utilitarian argument, and it is an incredibly influential way to make decisions, both personal and political.

In the fifth part of this course, we will raise the complex question of human inequality, using Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *A Discourse on Inequality* as our guide. Is inequality among human beings natural? Or is it unnatural – a deviation from an original human existence? Rousseau takes on these questions, and we will critically discuss his fascinating response to them, a response that continues to inspire social and political analysis today.

In the sixth part of this course, we will look at Charles W. Mills' *The Racial Contract*, in which institutionalized racism – or white supremacy – is explored as an especially oppressive form of unnatural human inequality. In this text, which is just twenty years old, political philosophy is criticized for its “normative whiteness.” We will work to understand this harsh criticism, and also to evaluate it.

In the seventh part of this course, we will explore the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, which he summarizes in *Existentialism Is a Humanism*. This text is about the human being as a fundamentally free being, a being for whom “existence precedes essence,” and in it we will discuss several concepts: from anguish to abandonment, from despair to bad faith. Time permitting, we will also watch the film *It's Such a Beautiful Day* by Don Hertzfeldt.

In the eighth and final part of this course, we will read *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a short text that makes a compelling case for feminism today. What is feminism, and what does it mean to be a feminist? Also, what are the different types of feminism? What, for example, are the “waves” of feminism? These are just some of the questions that we will consider.

### Required Texts

- *The Last Days of Socrates* by Plato; ISBN: 0140449280
- *Meditations on First Philosophy* by René Descartes; ISBN: 0192806963
- *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals* by Immanuel Kant; ISBN: 0061766313
- *Utilitarianism* by John Stuart Mill; ISBN: 0061766313
- *A Discourse on Inequality* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau; ISBN: 0140444394
- *The Racial Contract* by Charles W. Mills; ISBN: 0801484634
- *Existentialism Is a Humanism* by Jean-Paul Sartre; ISBN: 0300115466
- *We Should All Be Feminists* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, ISBN: 110191176X

*Always* have the appropriate texts with you in class, either as hard copies or as electronic documents.

## Course Format

This is a philosophy course, and it will consist of exegetical lectures, open discussion, and some occasional group work. Please be ready *every day* to ask a question or make a comment about the assigned text, as that is how I usually begin class.

As an instructor, I am pretty easy-going. I do, however, insist upon a respectful atmosphere in the classroom. What does this mean? It means: no phone calls, no texting, no sleeping, no ridiculously long bathroom breaks, and finally no computers, unless you absolutely need them for reading or note-taking. If your phone does go off during class, you have a choice: You can either sing a song for the class, or I can assign an additional paper that *everybody* must do. This is not a joke.

## Course Objectives

- Students will learn (and hopefully appreciate) what it means to do philosophy.
- Students will discover new (and possibly profound) concepts, ideas, and theories.
- Students will become better arguers (in the sense making and evaluating arguments).

## Student Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to explain course readings in pop quizzes and written papers.
- Students will be able to evaluate course readings in class discussion and written papers.
- Students will be able to develop their own arguments in class discussion and written papers.

## Course Requirements & Assessment

We will cover numerous texts in this course, and it is your responsibility to read the assigned pages *before class begins*. To this end, I will be giving you several pop quizzes throughout the semester, on which you may use your notes but not the texts themselves. They cannot be made up, so do not make lateness a habit.

In addition to these pop quizzes, I will be assigning three papers. The first will be due on Monday, October 16th, and the second will be due on Monday, November 20th. The third paper, which will be more substantial, will be due during finals week.

There will *not* be a midterm exam or a final exam.

## Expectations

Students are expected to spend at least two hours on academic studies outside, and in addition to, each hour of class time.

## Grading

Grades earned are based on your attendance, pop quizzes, and papers.

Attendance	10%
Pop Quizzes	20%
First Paper	20%
Second Paper	20%
Third Paper	30%
Total*	100%

\*Final Grades are assigned with the following scale:

Undergraduate Scale			
Grades Scored Between			Letter Equivalent
97	to	100	A+
94	to	Less than 97	A
90	to	Less than 94	A-
87	to	Less than 90	B+
84	to	Less than 87	B
80	to	Less than 84	B-
77	to	Less than 80	C+
74	to	Less than 77	C
70	to	Less than 74	C-
67	to	Less than 70	D+
63	to	Less than 67	D
60	to	Less than 63	D-
		Less than 60	F

## Course Outline

- August 28 – Course Introduction

### PLATO

- August 30 – *Euthyphro*, 2a-10a
- September 4 – NO CLASS
- September 6 – *Euthyphro*, 10b-16a
- September 11 – *Apology*, 17a-34b
- September 13 – *Apology*, 34c-42a
- September 18 – *Crito*, 43a-54e
- September 20 – *Phaedo*, 57a-91c
- September 25 – *Phaedo*, 91d-118a

### DESCARTES

- September 27 – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 13-17
- October 2 – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 17-24
- October 4 – *Meditations on First Philosophy*, pp. 25-37

### KANT

- October 9 – *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, pp. 55-60
- October 11 – *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, pp. 61-73
- October 16 – *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, pp. 74-113; FIRST PAPER DUE

### MILL

- October 18 – *Utilitarianism*, pp. 1-22
- October 23 – NO CLASS
- October 25 – *Utilitarianism*, pp. 23-55

#### ROUSSEAU

- October 30 – *A Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 67-107
- November 1 – *A Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 109-123
- November 6 – *A Discourse on Inequality*, pp. 123-137

#### MILLS

- November 8 – *The Racial Contract*, pp. 1-40
- November 13 – *The Racial Contract*, pp. 41-89
- November 15 – *The Racial Contract*, pp. 91-133

#### SARTRE

- November 20 – *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, pp. 17-38; SECOND PAPER DUE
- November 22 – NO CLASS
- November 27 – *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, pp. 38-54
- November 29 – Film: *It's Such a Beautiful Day*

#### ADICHIE

- December 4 – *We Should All Be Feminists*, pp. 3-48
- December 6 – Discussion & Catch-Up
- December 11 – Course Conclusion

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES & ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

The following policy excerpts have been taken from the [Student Handbook](#). Follow the link to view the policy in its entirety.

### Add/Drop Policy

Tuesday, September 5th is the final day to drop this course so that it does not appear on your transcript. After the first week of class, self-service registration will not be enabled for students to directly add or drop classes. Students should contact the registrar's office directly or the Academic Success Center for assistance with adding and dropping courses during this time.

### Attendance Policies

Students are expected to attend regularly and promptly all their classes, appointments, and exercises. The instructor has the right to dismiss from class any student who has been absent more than two weeks (pro-rated for terms different from that of the semester). A dismissed student will receive a withdrawal (**W**) from the course if they are still eligible for a withdrawal per the university *Withdrawal from a Course* policy, or a failure (**F**) if not. A student who is not officially registered in the course is not permitted to attend classes or take part in any other course activities. Students absent from any class meeting are responsible for making up missed assignments and examinations at the discretion of the instructor.

### Religious Observance Policy for Students

The University of New Haven respects the right of its students to observe religious holidays that may necessitate their absence from class or from other required university-sponsored activities. Students who wish to observe such holidays should not be penalized for their absence, although in academic courses they are responsible for making up missed work.

Note: Instructors should try to avoid scheduling exams or quizzes on religious holidays, but where such conflicts occur should provide reasonable accommodations for missed assignment deadlines or exams. If a class, an assignment due date, or exam interferes with the observance of such a religious holiday, it is the student's responsibility to notify his or her instructor, preferably at the beginning of the term, but otherwise at least two weeks before the holiday.

### **Withdrawal from a Course**

Friday, November 3rd is the final date to request a withdrawal for this term. Students wishing to withdraw from a course **MUST** officially do so by completing the [online](#) form or by submitting a [course withdrawal form](#) to the registrar's office. This request must be submitted to the Office of the University Registrar (and signed by the International Services Office if you are an international student). The grade of **W** will be recorded, but the course will not affect the GPA.

### **Incomplete (INC) Grade Policy**

A grade of Incomplete (**INC**) is given only in special circumstances and indicates that the student has been given permission by the instructor to complete required course work (with the same instructor) after the end of the term. In the absence of the instructor a student should contact the Department Chair.

### **Academic Integrity Policy and Procedures**

The University of New Haven expects its students to maintain the highest standards of academic conduct. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at the University. To know what it is expected of them, students are responsible for reading and understanding the statement regarding academic honesty in the [Student Handbook](#). Please ask me about my expectations regarding permissible or encouraged forms of student collaboration if there is any confusion about this topic. Please ask me about my expectations regarding permissible or encouraged forms of student collaboration if there is any confusion about this topic.

The [Dean of Students Office](#) offers a range of support to students. It answers questions; provides information about and referrals to campus resources; assists in students' adjustment to the University; promotes programs which address student needs, concerns and interests; and helps students in resolving problems of any type.

### **Commitment to Positive Learning Environment**

The University adheres to the philosophy that all community members should enjoy an environment free of any form of harassment, sexual misconduct, discrimination, or intimate partner violence. If you have been the victim of sexual misconduct, we encourage you to report this. If you report this to a faculty/staff member, they must notify our college's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose to request confidentiality from the University). If you encounter sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault, or discrimination based on race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability please contact the Title IX Coordinator, Caroline Koziatek, at 203-932-7479 or [ckoziatek@newhaven.edu](mailto:ckoziatek@newhaven.edu). For more information visit [Title IX at the University of New Haven](#).

### **Reporting Bias Incidents**

At the University of New Haven, there is an expectation that all community members are committed to creating and supporting a climate which promotes civility, mutual respect, and open-mindedness. There also exists an understanding that with the freedom of expression

comes the responsibility to support community members' right to live and work in an environment free from harassment and fear. It is expected that all members of the University community will engage in anti-bias behavior and refrain from actions that intimidate, humiliate, or demean persons or groups or that undermine their security or self-esteem. ([Reporting Options](#))

## **UNIVERSITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

The University recognizes that students can often use some help outside of class and offers academic assistance through several offices.

### **[Centers for Academic Success and Advising \(CASA\)](#)**

The Academic Success Center provides a wide range of academic support to day and evening undergraduate students beyond their first year of college.

### **[University Writing Center](#)**

The mission of the Writing Center (an expansion of the Writer to Writer peer-tutoring program) is to provide high-quality tutoring to undergraduate and graduate students as they write for a wide range of purposes and audience. Tutors are undergraduate and graduate students studying Biology, Communications, Criminal Justice, National Security, Engineering, English, Environmental Science, Finance, Forensic Science, Legal Studies, Marine Biology, Music, Nutrition, and Psychology. We are here to work with you at any stage in the writing process; just bring in your assignment, your ideas, and any writing you've done so far. To make an appointment, you can register for an account with our scheduling site at <https://newhaven.mywconline.com> or visit us in person at our desk on the first floor of Peterson Library (just to the left after you enter the library).

### **[Center for Learning Resources \(CLR\)](#)**

The Center for Learning Resources (CLR), located in the Peterson Library, provides academic content support to the students of the University of New Haven using metacognitive strategies that help students become aware of and learn to apply optimal learning processes in the pursuit of creating independent learners CLR tutors focus sessions on discussions of concepts and processes and typically use external examples to help students grasp and apply the material.

### **[Accessibility Resources Center](#)**

Students with disabilities are encouraged to share, in confidence, information about needed specific course accommodations. The Accessibility Resources Center, located in Sheffield Hall, is responsible for and committed to providing services and support that serve to promote educational equity and ensure that students are able to participate in the opportunities available at the University of New Haven. Accommodations cannot be made without written documentation from the Accessibility Resources Center.

### **[Counseling & Psychological Services](#)**

The Counseling Center offers a variety of services aimed at helping students resolve personal difficulties and acquire the balance, skills, and knowledge that will enable them to take full advantage of their experience at the University of New Haven.